



3 1761 07442814 5


H&SS
A
6061



Presented to
The Library
of the
University of Toronto
by
ESTATE OF THE LATE
PROFESSOR J. E. SHAW



533419



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

UNIVERSITY WORK
IN THE
ROMANCE LANGUAGES.*

BY
A. MARSHALL ELLIOTT, PH. D.

PROFESSOR OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES IN THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY,
BALTIMORE.

Twice within the last few months has the subject of advanced work in Romance Languages been treated publicly before the friends and members of two great European universities: first, on the occasion of the instalment at the University of Zurich of HEINRICH MORF as Professor of Romance Languages; secondly, on the induction into office as Rector of the University of Berlin of the distinguished Romance scholar, ADOLPH TOBLER, Professor of Romance Philology in that institution. The former chose as theme for discussion, "Das Studium der Romanischen Philologie"; the latter, "Romanische Philologie an den deutschen Universitäten." With this example of my European colleagues before me, I cannot express to you how sensibly I appreciate the privilege of inviting attention, for the first time in the history of an American institution, to some of the broad phases, the methods and claims not only of the new, but the newest philology, whose phenomenal development in the last

*An address delivered on the fifteenth anniversary of the Johns Hopkins University, February 22, 1891.

11 (Collection) 731891

decades has had no parallel in the annals of education. Scientific work in this domain has lain along a line which reaches backward from the modern Latin as spoken to-day in the countries of Southern Europe (France, Italy, Spain, etc.) into the Old Latin and the Italic dialects; but it is especially toward the farther end of the line, to the older periods of the Romance Languages proper, that attention has been given. This procedure is natural considering the previous training, according to classical models, of those who were the initiators of the new order, and considering further the mass of manuscript material which lay for centuries untouched in the great libraries, in the monasteries (later in the state archives) of Romance countries, and which material, when published, was destined to shed a flood of light on the early literary life, the history and civilization of modern Europe. It was the spirit of Romanticism, with its passion for contrasts, its eagerness to resurrect the thought of the past, its love for the origins, which led inquiring spirits to overstep the bounds of conventional criticism, and seek into the time and place of composition, the source, the original form of these literary monuments, their relation to other works, their position in general literature.

But while the main drift of activity was of a more distinctively literary nature in the beginning, and the publishing of texts from manuscripts was the chief work of the pioneer in this new field, yet a second current of development purely linguistic in character, started early beside the literary stream and has rapidly grown in vigor, until in certain cases it has threatened to disturb the harmony that should exist between the literary and scientific factors in every system of higher linguistic

training. A given specific *raison d'être* for this trend of matters would seem to be partly justified for countries where original written sources do not exist, and it is this phase of the subject which is emphasized in the address, just mentioned, by the Zurich professor.

Let us stop, then, for a few minutes to see what this exclusively scientific research means in its most recent aspects. In the first place, it means a direct face-about as regards traditional methods; a radical shift in point of view with reference to the material to be investigated. No prescriptive title to preference of treatment is granted for the old as compared with the modern forms, to the written as contrasted with the spoken language. To note the actual phenomena of the spoken language, is the fundamental tenet in the creed of this modern school which wastes no time in answering such flings from its opponents as BOSSUET addressed to Protestantism: *tu varies, donc tu as tort.*

The spoken idiom is the only source of literary speech; "every literary language is the product of a more or less arbitrary mixture of spoken languages of different periods." First, then, we must examine the source, where all the material lies before us for a given time and place, then move backward on the line of written documents in which the material grows less abundant and the evidence less satisfactory in proportion as our perspective with the present increases. But this perspective is necessary to our purpose, however, as we shall see later. "Language is the manifestation of the human mind, not a product of unalterable law, hence is not absolutely logical and symmetrical; on the other hand, it is not a chaos of

fortuitous accidents; it is subject to laws that grow and change with it and from this double point of view of law and development, under the double light of the past and present, it must be considered."

It will be observed how close the relationship must be between this method and that followed by the natural sciences: an orderly progression from the known to the unknown, from the special to the general; a strict observation of the facts of living speech and then the induction is recorded regardless of traditional authority. Nay, so closely allied to the physical sciences are certain departments of modern speech investigation, such as phonetics for example, that a recent English writer on this subject has uncompromisingly classed it in this category, that is, as a physical science. With this mode of treatment, too, we have the ends of the line of investigation reversed; hitherto, the speaker has been the point of departure for observation, now it is the hearer. But a veering here in points of the compass would boot but little if all hearers were like facetious TOM HOOD whose ear was better tuned to the melody of the "Song of the Shirt" than to the foreign sounds in French *mère, fille* (mother, daughter) which led him to declare with inimitable burlesque that the French "call their mothers mares and all their daughters fillies."

The flout and scorn with which VOLTAIRE arraigned etymology, as an art of divination, in his celebrated dictum "*que les voyelles n'y font rien et que les consonnes y font peu de chose,*" lose to-day their force in the light of the science of phonetics, no less delicate than sure, which linguistic fashion proclaims the basis, the backbone of modern philology.

True it is that this science "alone can breathe life into the dead mass of letters which constitute a written language; . . . it alone enables us to analyze and register the various phenomena of stress, intonation and quantity which are the foundation of word-division, sentence-structure, elocution, metre, and, in fact, enters into all the higher problems of language: a psychological study of language without phonetics is an impossibility."

A large part of the beautiful researches of Professor HELMHOLTZ, of Berlin, on "Sensations of Tone" are as suggestive for this branch of our work and as important for the philologist as for the physicist; in fact Dr. ALEXANDER JOHN ELLIS, the translator into English of Professor HELMHOLTZ' treatise; the author of "Early English Pronunciation;" a worker in linguistics through a long and successful career just ended, has made important additions to his original text with reference to vowel pitches.

Some of the recent practical inventions, too, in physical science, have contributed not a little to the advancement of this branch of linguistics: the phonograph, for instance, has been made to do good service in adding to our power of determining vowel relations, and we may look forward with confidence that the improvements made in this instrument will enable us to attain far better results in this branch of our linguistic knowledge than it has hitherto been possible to reach without such aid.

Again, just as the new Psychology has a definite relation to Physics, so in the new philology, the psychic element forms a strong determining factor for which allowance must be made in all the experiments performed

by the operator and, as the test is one of individual experience, he must strive to determine how far the personal equation acts as a disturbing check on laws whose operation might otherwise be general. Some excellent work has recently been done for this side of our subject both in Germany and France in the "Psychologische Studien zur Sprach Geschichte," by BRUCHMANN; in "La parole intérieure" and "La physiologie de la parole" by Messrs. EGGER and LEMOINE, and this fertile field promises to become the trysting place for extensive and important investigations in the modern languages. Yet in this connection, it is not alone from a consideration of the positive side of his subject that the investigator of living speech is to grapple with the delicate relations of thought to its outward expression, but also from the negative side where he has certain disturbed conditions of language that are all the more interesting and suggestive since by interruption or external modification, or a temporary switch-off from the smooth grooves of natural speech, the variations of law become exaggerated and hence may be more easily registered by the observer. Such modifications we find in the various phenomena of lesion in the speech centres of the brain, of atactic aphasia, paraphasia, etc., that have been so richly illustrated by KUSSMAUL in his "Störungen der Sprache." And further, besides the physical and psychological relations just noted, the closest regard for the elements of time and place becomes an indispensable requisite for the investigator of modern linguistic forms:—a knowledge of dialects is the stronghold where the observer may control the interlacing threads that, bundled together, constitute

the complex character of all living speech. Hence the increasing emphasis placed upon this branch of scientific work in European Universities, and we have numberless proofs to show how disastrous is often the lack of such knowledge for the worker in literature only. One instructive example may suffice in the citation of an Old French text to which was first assigned, with puzzling uncertainty by the editor in his zeal to stick to the script of his documents, a mixed dialect character, then successively, Anglo-Norman (French-English), Picard (North French), Île-de-France (Central French), and finally, Wallonian (Belgian) origin.

To fix the geographical distribution of his speech phenomena is, then, for the scientific worker, the first step toward a sound analysis: North French differs wholly from South French; one part of Paris rejoices in the special fashions and beauties of its speech as much as another part does in the styles of its new gowns; one part of Rouen is as proud of its Norman accent as another part is of the heroic deeds of William the Conqueror; Florence guards with jealous care traits of old Etruscan speech, that will-o'-the-wisp which has led many a scholar into the mire. By all this I mean that just as the biologist follows a rigid chorology of his material, that is, carefully notes on the field of observation the points where this or that type of living organisms exists, so the enquirer into the manifold complexities of living speech is helpless in determining the form and color of its life until he has taken his bearings, until he has marked off on his linguistic chart the zones of varied growth, has noted the centres of radiation, or registered the effects of isolated disturbing forces.

If we now glance at the literary side of our subject, we find that the principal jousting-place of Romance science has been the Older French literature and this for a two-fold reason : first, the demand for teachers with University training in this branch, and secondly, the fact that France was for a long time the intellectual centre whence material was carried to other European countries and on whose literary culture the Gallic spirit had a moulding and guiding influence ; in fact, for the thirteenth century, French was the only universal literary language in Europe.

In 1742 the first edition was published of an Old French poet, THIBAUT DE CHAMPAGNE, King of Navarre, who had played an active rôle as crusader, and who, according to tradition had cherished a tender passion for Blanche of Castille, the mother of St. Louis of France. It was particularly with the view of throwing light on the true relationship of the two royal personages, investigating the origin of French poetic art and the relation of the *chanson* that the editor LEVESQUE DE LA RAVALIÈRE had the courage to give to light the clever and graceful *Chansons* of this poet prince. A decade before this inaugural work was published, the beginning was laid by the Benedictine monks of the celebrated Abbey St. Maure (near Paris) of the *Histoire littéraire de la France*, that magnificent undertaking which became the repository of intellectual activity in France with regard to its older literary monuments.

Published since the beginning of the present century under the auspices of the French Academy of Inscriptions, this history presented, on account of its wide scope,

but a general and imperfect picture of the rich and varied literature of Old France, hence we soon find the learned provincial societies of France joining the Academy in making known the variety and extensive range of their literary treasures which are more distinctively vernacular.

Foreign, that is non-French, academies and learned bodies likewise vied with one another in opening up the sources of thought which once found a reflex in their respective literatures; thus, in England, the Camden and Caxton Societies, the Roxburgh (formerly the Bannatyne Club,) the Oxford University publications, such as LE ROUX DE LINCY'S "Blonde d'Oxford," the "Oxford Psalter," etc.; in Germany, the various Royal Academies, the *Literarischer Verein* of Stuttgart, etc.

Particularly expensive documents, covering a wide range of material, have been brought to light by the French Government; as, for instance, the *Documents inédits sur l'histoire de France* (begun in 1836). After editing a recent volume in this great collection, M. PAUL MEYER, Director of *École des Chartes*, one of the leading Romance scholars of France, took occasion to call attention, in a public address before the historical society of France, to the large and important mass of material in the old language which must be consulted by every worker in French history who would know its sources.

It was in the midst of this early growing zeal to make known the characteristic sources of modern Latin literature and language that a German scholar appeared on the stage of action whose personality and incisive method have indelibly stamped all that is best in the production of this field for the last half-century. From the investi-

gations of FRIEDRICH DIEZ, pupil of WELCKER, BOUTERWEK, BUNSEN, whose attention had been called to Provençal literature by GOETHE, date the new Romance philology and the foundation of a philological manipulation of old Romance texts. Imbued with the spirit of the German scientific school represented by LACHMANN, his old Romance poems, published in 1852, were epoch-making in their novel mode of handling the older monuments, and served immediately as the prototype for text criticism according to philological canons. Heretofore, the simple reprint of texts, generally from a single MS. called the good one, constituted the chief critical labor of the editor.

But it was not till just twenty years later that the legend of St. Alexis, so popular in the middle ages, received at the hands of a master, Professor GASTON PARIS of the Collège de France, a treatment that has since been the model for every one who would approach the sources in the spirit and light of modern scholarship. The gist of this spirit lies in dealing with the old literature of France more from the philological point of view than from that of literary history, but the former is a necessary forerunner of the latter: "philology and speech criticism have thus for the time being ceased to play the rôle of handmaid to literary history and find in the latter the simple crowning of their work." In accordance with this doctrine, a host of documents have appeared within the past fifteen years—a period that may properly represent the high-water mark of text criticism, publication of sources, research into the origins of literary forms, into the inter-dependence of literary periods, into the relations of different literatures with one another, etc. The

subject-matter thus brought to light from MS. material covers almost every field of literature: epics, didactic and moral poetry, drama, romances of chivalry, fabliaux, lays, legends, songs, prose and translations. But notwithstanding the hundreds of texts that have been edited since the naissance of this new science, it is to be remembered that the work has been limited for the most part to one division only in the Romance field, and even here it is impossible to see the end of the labor; especially true is this for the historical sources which still lie in great numbers unanalyzed and practically unknown in the state archives of the different departments of France. I had ample opportunity to observe how limited is our acquaintance with these sources, while working recently in the archives of Amiens and Rouen—MSS. collections that are rich both in linguistic and departmental history. Here the MS. documents are stacked in the archives bureau and the detailed analysis of them for official publication by government functionaries, is a slow and laborious process. The Old French Text Society, however, an organization called into existence in 1875, has published under its auspices more than fifty volumes. To the *École des Chartes*, is due the honor in no small measure of having stimulated the rapid growth of paleographical studies by the special training here given in deciphering manuscripts. The *École des Hautes Etudes*, too, organized in 1869, on German models with the Seminary idea as its basis, has rendered invaluable service in all departments of research pertaining to the mediæval literature and language of France. These are a few only of the official channels by which this awakening into a new

intellectual life has manifested itself: time would fail me to sketch in barest outline the circle of private publications which grows larger with every year; or note the groups, by nationalities, of notable workers who have entered this fresh field so full of charm and so rich in promise. The numerous publications of both descriptive and analytic catalogues of Romance MSS.; the advance of Art in the multiplication of copies of valuable MSS. either by simple photographs or through the various processes of photographic printing, as in heliotype or heliogravure reproductions; the founding of a large number of Romance scientific journals—all these aids have contributed materially to bridge over the disadvantages of non-residence near the sources and to centralize effort with a common focus in view. But the dawn of these studies lies too near us yet to expect co-ordinated movement along the whole line of research:—it has been appropriately said that Romance philology finds itself to-day very much in the same position as physical science which first discovers and investigates the forms of nature before giving a picture of it.

A brief reference to the efforts of Germany in this direction, as a non-Latin country, may not be out of place here, especially as her experiments in the new discipline have been watched with keen interest from this side of the Atlantic, and her instructive experience followed in more than passing details. Romance philology had its origin here as elsewhere in the reaction of the Romantic school of literature against classicism, and its first work was to replace the superficial belles-lettres view of the older products of Romance thought by a strictly

historical method of treatment. The new science thus constituted itself a subject worthy of University recognition, and has been represented as such for more than half a century; forty years ago it entered the learned Academies, where it has since had an ever increasing influence.

In 1830 was founded at Bonn the first professorship of Romance Languages in a European University [twenty years later (1853) a chair was specially created in the Collège de France for M. PAULIN PARIS, father of the present incumbent]; for thirty years Germany had but four such chairs (Bonn, Halle, Marburg, Tübingen), but in the next two decades every University in the kingdom had its Professor Ordinarius, and, at the present writing, some of these institutions have two or three full professors, besides a series of *privatdozenten*, who add greatly to the effective force of the University. In other European countries this subject is regarded as essential to the curricula of higher education, and they have accordingly one or more professors in the department. Spain alone has no representative, and only one University in England (Cambridge) has a Professor of Romance Languages.

Considering the literary traditions which we in America have received as a sacred legacy from the mother country, the study of the Romance languages and literatures, in the spirit that I have endeavored to sketch them, must appeal to our sympathies in an especial manner, for English speaking peoples cannot forget that England was for nearly three hundred years the cradle of an important branch of French literature; the study of the development of Norman literature on English soil means to work

out our own intellectual history, and this is true not only for the Old English period where the fabulous story of Britain was told in the "Brut" of LAVAMON, when the metrical romance of "King Alisaunder" was sung to French originals, but the Restoration brought a "new movement in English dramatic circles." Then it was that "French manners, language and literature entered England, and soon became a part of cultured life as they had never done before." It is said that DRYDEN made rhyme the vehicle of tragedy partly in imitation of CORNEILLE, and more than one writer of prose comedy of manners derived his inspiration from MOLIÈRE.

Under Queen Elizabeth the Italian novelle (novels) poured into England and "found their way into the homes of almost all classes, and rivalled the new Geneva Bible and the Revised Prayer-Book in popularity." The wise ROGER ASCHAM, University Orator at Cambridge and Preceptor to the Queen, exclaims in that remarkable work of his, the "Scholemaster:" "they think more of Petrarch and Boccaccio than of the Bible," and a recent writer shows us that to the introduction of these novelle do we owe in English literature the "creation of a prose fiction and the commencement of a new prose style." English poets visited Italy and returned laden with poetic fancies. MILTON, the grasp and stretch of whose genius we have had so ably portrayed to us in a recent course of lectures before this University, cheerfully acknowledges the inspiration that he derived from the singer of the *Gerusalemme liberata*, and "every reader of Shakespeare, however uncritical, is struck by the fact that the names of the dramatis personæ in so many of his plays are Italian,

and that the scene where incidents occur is so often an Italian town. When he discovers that the poet is indebted for the leading incident of the play to some Italian novel he begins to wonder what would be left if the borrowed elements were taken away. In that case, he thinks, we should have no 'Othello,' no 'Romeo and Juliet,' we should lose the 'Merchant of Venice,' 'Much Ado About Nothing,' and 'Measure for Measure'; we should miss much that gives vivacity and interest to the 'Tempest,' the 'Taming of the Shrew,' and 'Twelfth Night'; we should have to give up more or less of the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' 'All's Well that Ends Well,' and the 'Comedy of Errors.' All these plays, he finds, are derived, either directly or indirectly, either in the whole plot or in part of it, from translations of Italian novels."

No wonder, then, that an English prize essayist, touching on this period of our intellectual life, should have ventured the sentiment, that "Italy gave us materials and colors, easel and paint brushes, set models and copies before us, and then left us to paint our own pictures." And I may be pardoned, I hope, for citing in this connection my own experience while working recently in the British Museum. Desirous to trace the earliest contact of Italian with English thought and literary growth, I found this not a difficult task for the linguistic side of the subject, but when I turned to the literature proper, the material soon grew to so prodigious proportions that it was impossible for me to compass it in a limited time. I was forced to abandon, temporarily, the treatment of so extensive a theme.

In conclusion, let me plead that the wide reaching reform whose outlines have here been characterized, bears nothing antagonistic in its methods or subversive in its purposes; alongside of the other great educational movements of the nineteenth century it has taken its place, supported and nourished by the industry, zeal and enthusiasm of followers who would strive, through it, to appreciate and make bright another light of our common intellectual heritage—a light which was dimmed for a season by too narrow a sympathy and too exclusive a spirit. Modern international culture, the goal on which we have set our eyes so hopefully, was a difficult thing nearly half a century ago, when it was represented in this country by only two distinguished literary workers, LONGFELLOW and JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL. “The latter is still our ripest, richest, broadest literary scholar,” and he shall say the last word for me in this first brief presented for the Romance Languages:—

“The day will come, nay, it is dawning already, when it will be understood that the masterpieces of whatever language are not to be classed by an arbitrary standard, but stand on the same level in virtue of being masterpieces; that thought, imagination, and fancy may make even a *patois* acceptable to scholars; that the poets of all climes and of all ages ‘sing to one clear harp in divers tones,’ and that the masters of prose and the masters of verse in all tongues teach the same lesson and exact the same fee.”

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

H&SS
A
6061

